

Butte County System Improvement Plan (SIP) Executive Summary – September 28, 2004

In 2001, the California State Legislature enacted Assembly Bill 636 (AB 636), the Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act to improve outcomes for children in the child welfare system while holding county and state agencies accountable for the outcomes achieved. This statewide system is an enhanced version of the federal oversight system mandated by Congress and used to monitor states' performance.

Under California's new accountability system which went into effect January 1, 2004, each county now receives quarterly data reports on their outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency and well-being of children and families who come into contact with the child welfare system.

County Self-Assessment – In June 2004, DESS and Probation conducted a self-assessment using community-based groups, surveys, focus groups and meetings to facilitate public input into the process. The intent of this self-assessment was for Butte County to examine all program areas to determine the basis for their current level of performance and to help them identify and remove barriers to improving performance.

System Improvement Plan (SIP) – Following the County Self-Assessment, DESS and Probation collaborated with other local partners to develop a county System Improvement Plan (SIP). The purpose of the SIP is to establish program priorities, define specific action steps to achieve improvement and establish goals for improvement. The initial SIP covers a one-year period. Subsequent SIPs will be three year plans with an annual update. As mandated by AB 636, Butte County's SIP must be approved by its Board of Supervisors and submitted to the state by September 30, 2004.

The key elements of the plan for the first year are as follows:

- Improve accurate and timely entry of data into the Child Welfare System/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) in order to correctly reflect the work that is being done.
- Create a team of county staff and community partners to analyze why children are experiencing a recurrence of abuse/neglect and re-entering the system. Based on findings, develop a strategic approach that includes accessing available prevention services in the community to reduce the recurrence of maltreatment.
- Implement a pilot program in the South County where community based organizations will provide preventative services targeted at children ages 0 to 5 and their families who need support, but whose child abuse/neglect reports do not meet government standards for intervention. This program is funded through a grant from the Butte County Children and Families Commission.

- Develop procedures to identify Native American children in the juvenile justice system in order to access available tribal services and place within the Native American community where possible and appropriate.
- Maximize use of Family Group Decision-Making Facilitators in order to increase parental involvement in decisions that affect their family.
- Analyze staffing and workload issues to ensure that fiscal and human resources are being maximized to their greatest potential.
- Increase community partners access to information regarding recurrence of maltreatment by sharing quarterly data reports.

Based on the County Self Assessment, there are a number of areas in which Butte County is doing well. These include but are not limited to:

- DESS has a 98.5% rate of compliance with timely response to child abuse referrals requiring an Immediate Response within 24 hours.
- Probation is doing an excellent job in conducting mandated monthly visits of all children in probation placements.
- Butte has a highly successful Independent Living Program (ILP) which works with both Children's Services and Probation youth who are transitioning out of foster care. Assistance is provided with employment and training, college and financial aid, housing and medical care, life skills training and other support.
- Butte County's rate of children in group homes at a given point in time (January 2004) was 4.5% compared to the state rate of 9.0%. This is due in large part to the success of the multi-agency placement team (Probation, DESS, BCOE and Behavioral Health) that meets weekly to staff cases with the goal of placing children in Butte County, in the least restrictive placement possible, and promoting early reunification with their families when appropriate.
- Siblings requiring out-of-home placement are able to remain together in Butte County at a greater rate than the state.
- Butte has an extremely low incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care as compared to the state rate.
- Butte County rates high in its ability to partner and collaborate with other county and community agencies to improve services to children and families.

Butte County Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act (AB 636) System Improvement Plan (SIP) Narrative

A. Introduction

Butte County's initial one-year System Improvement Plan (SIP) will focus on all Safety Outcomes identified as needing improvement. These measures are designed to reflect the effectiveness of efforts to protect children from abuse/neglect by reporting instances of abuse and neglect at various stages of child welfare services, and process measures which reflect the frequency of social worker contact with children and the speed of face to face investigation of abuse/neglect allegations. Areas to be addressed include: 1A and 1B – Recurrence of Maltreatment both Federal and State outcome indicators, 2A – Rate of Recurrence of Abuse/Neglect in Homes Where Children Were Not Removed, 2B – Percent of Child Abuse/Neglect Referrals with a Timely Response, and 2C – Timely Social Worker Visits with Child. In addition, Probation will focus its improvement efforts on Permanency and Stability Outcome 4E – ICWA Placement Preferences.

Three outcome measures that require improvement involve the recurrence of maltreatment. Butte County experiences a relatively high rate of recurrence of maltreatment when compared to the state, the region and other counties of similar size. In order to develop a strategic approach to preventing the recurrence of abuse and neglect, an analysis needs to be conducted to determine why families are repeatedly re-entering the child welfare system. Factors which may contribute include: demographic and economic issues, gaps in preventative services, unequal access to services, staffing and workload issues, and a need for a better and more uniform risk assessment and decision making tool for social work staff. Efforts to address these outcome measures include:

- Case Review Teams (CRT) comprised of child welfare and probation staff, public and private agency and community partners will analyze cases and referrals which have experienced a recurrence of maltreatment to better identify specific factors and issues that may be addressed to affect this outcome.
- Effective October 2004, a Differential Response pilot program, funded by the Butte County Children and Families Commission, will be implemented in the South County area. This pilot is a partnership between a number of community based organizations and DESS to provide preventative services targeted at children ages 0 to 5 and their families who need support, but whose child abuse/neglect reports do not meet government standards for intervention.

- The Department of Employment and Social Services (DESS) will seek to both maximize use and pursue expansion of its contract for Family Group Decision Making Facilitators to facilitate family-focused, strengths-based family meetings regarding placement and case plan issues. This is a research-based practice that has proven to engage the family sooner, decrease the amount of time a child spends in foster care, and increase the likelihood of successful family reunification.

The percent of child abuse/neglect referrals with a timely response is a process measure designed to determine the percent of cases in which face to face contact with a child occurs, or is attempted, within the regulatory time frames in those situations in which a determination is made that the abuse or neglect allegations indicate significant danger to the child. These are stratified by immediate response (24 hour) and ten-day referrals. Butte County does an excellent job in responding to immediate response referrals with a 98.5% compliance rate. Ten-day referral response times average 78% and requires improvement. Timely social worker visits with children is a process measure designed to determine if social workers are seeing the children on a monthly basis when required. Butte County's rate of compliance is at 56% and also requires improvement. For both these outcome measures it is believed that part of the problem is inaccurate and/or untimely data entry that provides a false picture of the work that is actually being done. Training and technical assistance will be provided to staff and monitored by supervisors to address this issue. In addition, deployment of staff and workload issues will be evaluated to determine their affect on these outcomes and develop a plan of action to address if necessary.

Probation's goal is to develop procedures to collect, confirm and document the Native American status and ICWA eligibility of children involved in the juvenile justice system in order to access available tribal services and place within the Native American community where possible and appropriate.

Pursuant to instructions from the California Department of Social Services, Butte County is addressing all safety outcome indicators requiring improvement in this initial SIP, along with one permanency outcome being addressed by Probation. Information obtained during the self-assessment process relating to permanency and well-being outcome measures will be incorporated into the subsequent three-year SIP.

B. Local Planning Bodies

Butte County engaged in collaborative and planning relationships with a diverse and extensive array of stakeholders that serve at risk children and families for the Self-Assessment and SIP processes. This was accomplished through work with local planning bodies, surveys and focus groups.

Children's Services Coordinating Council (CSCC) – Developed pursuant to SB997, the Children's Services Coordinating Council is comprised of representatives from county agencies, community based organizations, private non-profits, one member of the Board of Supervisors, schools, law enforcement, consumers, and members of the Local Child Care Planning and Child Abuse Prevention Councils. CSCC is responsible for facilitating the planning and delivery of services to children and families by:

- Providing leadership to encourage the development of a comprehensive and integrated system of services at the local level through interagency coordination;
- Minimizing duplication and improving access to services;
- Identifying gaps in services to target population;
- Conducting ongoing assessment of service delivery to children and families as a basis for systems change.

The CSCC is currently finalizing their strategic plan for the next three years. This plan will incorporate the Child Welfare Redesign and Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act (AB 636) into its efforts regarding training, systems integration, and service delivery. The SIP has been reviewed and discussed at both the CSCC Executive Committee and full council. The Department of Employment and Social Services (DESS) Assistant Director is a member and past chair of this council.

Butte County Child Abuse Prevention Council (BCCAPC) – The BCCAPC was established in 1975 to meet the community's need for sharing of information to prevent child abuse and to strengthen families. Membership is comprised of representatives from county agencies (including DESS); community based organizations, private non-profits, law enforcement, medical community and private citizens. The BCCAPC is a private non-profit agency that provides training and outreach regarding child abuse and neglect, social service programs, and best practices.

Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) – This collaborative consists of representatives from agencies who receive PSSF funds. Its purpose is to monitor the services being delivered through PSSF funding and make recommendations for needed changes. Butte County will go out with a request for proposal (RFP) for 2005-06 for both the PSSF and Child Abuse Intervention and Treatment (CAPIT) monies. A meeting with this collaborative is scheduled for December 2004 to discuss the need to link PSSF and CAPIT funded services to the improvement of AB 636 outcome measures.

Butte County Children and Families Commission – This Commission administers funds allocated to Butte County through the California Children and Families Act of 1998 to promote the health and well being of children from pre-natal to five

years of age, and their families. The Department of Employment and Social Services (DESS) Director is a member and past Chair of this commission. DESS is a participant in a collaborative that received funding from the Commission to pilot a Differential Response Intake System in the South County (See Section E). The Commission remains an important source of funding for prevention and early intervention services.

Safe From the Start – Established in 2000, The California Safe from the Start Initiative is a comprehensive strategy to bring community leaders together to assure that children grow up in safe, healthy environments. The project targets children, ages 0 to 18 who have been exposed to family, school and/or community violence. In Butte County membership includes representatives from public and private agencies (including DESS and Probation), tribal community, law enforcement, schools, community leaders and citizens. This group sponsors conferences, provides training, looks at system integration and change, and works to pursue various funding opportunities.

Tribal Council Interventions – This group meets monthly to discuss issues related to Native American families in regards to involvement with Children's Services, ICWA regulations, Indian expert testimony, and availability and access to services. Membership is comprised primarily of representatives from the tribal community, DESS, and Behavioral Health.

Local Child Care Planning Council (LCCPC) – Developed pursuant to AB 2141, the Council plans and coordinates child care and development services through a collaborative effort of individuals, public agencies and private organizations by the promotion of affordable, available, accessible, high quality services for Butte County families. Membership includes representatives from child care consumers and providers, public agencies (including DESS), and the community. It increasingly appears that child care providers have a role in preventing child maltreatment and partnering with child welfare services. Reaching out to parents in some way can assist in both ameliorating the conditions that lead to maltreatment and keeping an eye on children already involved in the child welfare system.

Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC) – Pursuant to AB 1913, the JJCC is responsible for monitoring and oversight of the Probation Department's Juvenile Justice Plan. Membership includes representatives from county agencies, private non-profits, law enforcement, citizens, schools, public defenders and community leaders.

A component of the SIP is to share quarterly outcome data with the above partners in order to engage them in continuous dialogue regarding what each one can contribute within their area of responsibility and expertise to address the community issue of recurrence of maltreatment. The goal is to continue to seek

ways to maximize resources, identify gaps, and avoid duplication of services while increasing access.

C. Self Improvement Team Members

SIP Team members included: *Cathi Grams, Dwayne Elam, and Karen Ely/ Department of Employment and Social Services, Cynthia Knowlton/Probation, Richard W. Smith/California State Adoptions, *Bob Michels/North Valley Catholic Social Services. CSCC Executive Members include: Lee Wood / Butte County Office of Education, Anastacia Snyder / Catalyst, Mary Anne Houx / Member Butte County Board of Supervisors, George Silar / Youth for Change, Debra Henley / Department of Public Health, Michael Clarke, PhD. / Department of Behavioral Health, Rosalind Hussong PhD. / Feather River Tribal Health, Carol Roberts / Valley Oak Children's Services, Dana Campbell / Parent Education Network, Peggy Mitchell / Local Child Care Planning Council, Valerie Peck / California State University, Chico, Steve Ellen / Probation.

(* Also members of the CSCC Executive Committee).

D. Findings that Support Qualitative Change

Data collection for the Butte County Self-Assessment and SIP was accomplished through a variety of methods including, county-specific data on outcome measures related to safety, permanency and well-being derived from the Child Welfare System/Case Management System (CWS/CMS), web based reports, surveys, focus groups and community meetings.

CWS/CMS Based Data Collection

A variety of resources based on the data input into the CWS/CMS information management system were used to analyze the safety outcome indicators and the systemic factors for the SIP. These include:

- CWS/CMS computer system – Information was used from the program management reports provided on this system and from research into individual cases.
- Business Objects –This system was used to generate reports on specific fields in the CWS/CMS system.
- UC Berkeley Child Welfare Research Center – This web based research project provided county-specific data reports.
- Safe Measures – Butte County subscribes to this web based reporting program that provides a wealth of information for analysis of department, unit or individual trends and performance. This information was used to do more specific client centered research of some of the performance indicators and systemic factors for the self-assessment. This tool is an integral part of the SIP designed to review and monitor compliance, improvement and trends.

Surveys

Surveys were used to gather information and evaluate systemic factors relating to case plans and family involvement from both Native American and non-Indian birth parents.

Native American Birth Parent Survey

In collaboration with tribal representatives, a survey was developed and offered to Native American families to solicit input regarding their experience with the child welfare system. Responses from 15 families were received. The tribal affiliations included Pueblo, Cherokee, Maidu, Chickasaw, Chaktaw, Shasta and Berry Creek Rancheria.

Child Welfare Services Parent Survey

This survey was distributed to parents who receive services from Northern Valley Catholic Social Services and are currently involved in the child welfare system. Responses from 14 families were received.

A wide range of questions were asked in each survey including: opinions/feelings regarding child welfare services, areas needing improvement, cultural beliefs/values, social worker interactions, level and quality of services provided and client satisfaction. Responses from both surveys were similar and responses were varied ranging from satisfied to extremely dissatisfied. Common themes throughout the responses were: case plans were often confusing and difficult to understand; an expressed desire to have more of a voice in what happens to the family; a need for more honest communication; agencies should have a better understanding of cultural issues that affect placement decisions; and more accessible services for parents.

This information was extremely valuable and is responded to in the SIP through a plan to increase the use and number of Family Group Decision-Making Facilitators, and better identification of Native American children in the juvenile justice system.

Focus Groups

During the Self-Assessment process, four focus groups were held. These included:

- Foster youth currently involved in the Independent Living Program (ILP);
- Former foster youth, both child welfare and probation, involved in the Aftercare Program component of the Independent Living Program;
- Parents group that included birth parents, foster parents and relative caretakers;

- Attorneys and Children's Services Supervisors.

Youth Focus Groups

The groups met for three hours each and discussed a variety of questions. Topics included their personal experiences with the child welfare system, future plans, and what they would like to share with other children coming into foster care. The youth enthusiastically participated in the discussions which were lively and respectful. Common themes included very specific and detailed plans for the future, the importance of a loving relationship usually boyfriend or girlfriend, the importance of having enough money and ability to "listen" to and respect one another in a group setting. The former foster youth talked about the importance of staying in school and how difficult it was to survive financially once out on their own. There was unanimous praise for the ILP program and its staff and a belief that the support they received was critical to their continued success. Youth expressed that social work staff was most effective when they were honest in their communication and respected the youth's confidence. While not included in the first one-year SIP, information obtained through these focus groups will be used toward continuous improvement of our ILP program and the goal of successfully transitioning foster youth into adulthood.

Parent Focus Group

Nine parents participated, five whose children had been removed, one family friend, one sister/aunt of two whose children had been removed, and two grandmothers (one a foster parent). Primary discussion involved issues around family structure, experiences with child welfare and suggestions to improve services. Common themes included: the need to expand the range of persons involved in case planning and decision making (include more relatives and non-related family members); difficulty in navigating and accessing services; a stated need to ensure sibling visitation; and a desire for increased parental visits and increased counseling for parents. This information was used to analyze the systemic factors of parent-youth participation in case planning, service array and general case planning and review. The SIP addresses these issues through the plan to increase the use and number of Family Group Decision-Making Facilitators.

Attorney and Children's Services (CS) Supervisor Focus Group

The Attorney/CS Supervisor focus group included four attorneys (three defense attorneys and one CS attorney) and eight CS Supervisors. Some of the areas discussed included: efforts to improve relationships between CS and the Juvenile Court; use of continuances; termination of parental rights; courthouse facilities and the use of alternative dispute resolution. Of note is the willingness of all parties to try new processes to ensure that families are best represented and attorneys are fully aware of each case. There was interest in dispute resolution

services in the county to resolve issues prior to appearances in court. This information was used to evaluate the systemic factor of court relations. The juvenile court judge(s), attorneys, social work and probation staff all continue to be innovative and proactive in the area of court relations. While this continues to be a work in progress, the general feeling is that Butte County does well in this area.

All the information collected through these processes has been considered in determining milestones, processes and strategies for the SIP and has been invaluable in developing system improvements that will positively affect performance outcomes

E. Prevention Strategies

The current federal financing structure does not support the current measures of success for children that are based on models that encourage preserving the child's family and seeking other permanent alternatives to foster care. The largest federal funding source for child welfare focuses on out-of-home placement rather than the provision of prevention and reunification services to children and families. The "cornerstone" of Child Welfare Redesign however is the development of a "differential response" system. This change to the child abuse hotline would fundamentally transform the ability of social workers to refer families to community organizations to better assist families who need support, but whose child abuse/neglect reports do not meet government standards for intervention. The majority of cases reported to child protection services do not qualify for county office intervention, yet many of these children and families clearly need support. Approximately one-third of hotline referrals are re-referrals of the same families from the previous year. There is overwhelming understanding and support for this concept within the provider community however without adequate funding, full implementation will be difficult to achieve.

Butte County's prevention strategy has been to create partnerships with other public and private agencies, schools, and law enforcement agencies to maximize revenues by blending, braiding and matching funding or pursuing grant opportunities where possible to create additional prevention services. Specific goals for prevention are outlined expressly in the SIP templates and include: identify reasons for recurrence of maltreatment so that limited resources can be targeted where most effective, gaps in services can be identified and funding and system change pursued; implement a pilot program of "differential response" in the South County area targeting children ages 0 to 5 and their families; and link allocation of PSSF and CAPIT funding to specific outcome expectations to address AB 636 outcome measures.

An array of prevention activities from education and outreach to direct service provision are provided through, or funded by, the collaborative bodies discussed

in Section B. Additional county-wide prevention efforts articulated in the County Self-Assessment Plan include: Family Resource Centers located in four communities; One-Stop Employment Centers located in two communities (DESS, Private Industry Council, Public Health clinics, and representatives from Behavioral Health, Employment Development Department, Butte College and Oroville Adult School are present in one or both centers), out stationed social work staff in two school districts, collaboration between CalWORKs and child welfare staff for mutual clients; a Safe From the Start pilot in South County between Catalyst and law enforcement for those families experiencing domestic violence; a web-based directory of all available services in Butte County, Helpcentral.org; and a number of mentor or therapeutic juvenile courts.

Butte County has both unique challenges in regards to poverty, unemployment and drug abuse issues, as well as many opportunities that are created by a community with a very strong history and record of successful collaborative efforts and partnerships that increase and enhance services to children and families.

Butte County AB 636 Self Assessment Summary Assessment

Butte County is a medium sized county 200,000, with a rural and urban mix. Butte County experiences a higher poverty and unemployment rate per capita than the State, as well as significant substance abuse issues. The County ranks eighth for total seizures of clandestine laboratories of the forty-nine reporting counties. Methamphetamine use was involved in 83% of drug arrests and 68% of the total arrests by the Butte Interagency Narcotics Task Force.

Butte County currently has approximately 50,000 children under the age of eighteen. Butte County's rate of referral for child abuse and neglect has increased slightly from 127 referrals per 1000 children to 128 referrals per 1000 children between 1999 to 2002. During that same time period, the substantiation rate of referrals has decreased from 20% to the current figure of 16 percent. The rate of children in Foster Care over the past several years has remained stable with approximately 700 children in out of home placement at any given time. While the numbers have remained stable, the number of children in out of home placement per 1,000 is 13.7 which exceeds the State rate of 8.9 per thousand. According to 2002 information from U.C. Berkeley regarding first entry into foster care, the majority of children are detained from communities in the south portion of the County.

Butte County's Children's Services has made significant changes to the provision of services to children and families. A new structure has been implemented that created multi-function units. Each multi-function unit is comprised of primary workers and IR/ER/Court workers. This design assigns a primary and IR/ER/Court worker in the initial phases of the case. This allows the family to engage with the primary worker early in the process and reduces the number of separate social workers involved with the family. Another change is the addition of the Family Team Decision-Making process. This involves strength based, family centered meetings to address placement issues, develop case plans and ongoing service needs. Under contract to Children's Services, two facilitators have been hired to organize and facilitate these meetings.

Butte County faces some unique challenges that include substance abuse, poverty, and a lack of available services in all communities. However Butte County possesses unique strengths in the form of community collaboration, creative partnerships, and a common vision for the health, safety and well-being of children, Butte County's Children's Services continues in its commitment to explore new and innovative ways to best serve the children and families of Butte County.

C-CFSR Outcomes

Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect

Findings

- Recurrence of Maltreatment is rated higher than the current State level and higher than the Federal Standard. African American children are disproportionately represented in this indicator as African Americans make up two percent of the general population but account for 25% of the total recurrence of maltreatment.
- Children with a first substantiated referral have a lower rate of recurrence than those previously in the Child Welfare system.
- The rate of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care is lower than the current State rate and is a County strength.
- Immediate Response rates are higher than the State rate and is a County strength.
- Ten-day responses are rated lower than the State rate. This is primarily a data clean-up issue and will be addressed in the SIP.
- Timely social worker visits with children are rated lower than the State at this time. This is primarily a data clean-up issue as it is believed that visits are being conducted but may not be entered in CWS/CMS in a timely and/or accurate fashion. Training has begun to remedy this issue and will be addressed in the SIP.

Conclusions

- Children's Services is doing well in the areas of rate of child abuse and neglect in out-of-home care and immediate response to child abuse and neglect referrals.
- The areas of recurrence of maltreatment, 10-day response to referrals and timely visits need to be addressed.
- As a result of the disproportionate rate of African Americans experiencing recurrence of maltreatment, further investigation into the cause needs to occur.
- Rates of Maltreatment are higher in South County and the bulk of available services are in North County. The need for development of more services in South County is indicated.

E. Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate

Findings

- The rate of recurrence of abuse/neglect in homes where children were not removed is higher than the State rate.
- General neglect is the primary reason for recurrence of maltreatment and may be reflective of the higher unemployment and poverty rates, and substance abuse issues in Butte County.
- The rates of recurrence for children not removed are lower for African American and Hispanic children.
- Timely response to referrals and timely social worker visits with children were addressed in the previous section.

Conclusions

- Increased in-home parenting services, employment, mentoring and life skill services may help to decrease the recurrence of abuse/neglect in homes where children were not removed.
- Services need to be equally available, affordable and accessible in all communities.

Permanency and Stability

Children have permanency and stability in their living situations without increasing re-entry

Findings

- Butte County is currently rated higher than the State in length of time to exit foster care to reunification but is rated below the Federal standard.
- The 0-5 age group meets the Federal standard for reunification, however the 11-17 age group has the lowest rate of reunification. This difference in the rates of reunification for different age groups is of interest and is a potential area for study in the future.
- Butte County's rate of adoption within 24 months closely matches the State rate but is lower than the Federal Standard.
- The majority of children are adopted after 24 months. This may reflect a number of factors including: legislated timelines for permanency may not accurately reflect the length of time to complete an adoption: parents being given extended time to complete reunification services before adoption services begin: and internal processes may need to be reviewed and streamlined to prevent unnecessary delays or continuances.
- It is of note that no children in the 11-18 age range were adopted within 24 months, which may be due to a lack of services targeted to support adoption of older children.

- Butte County's rate for multiple foster care placements exceeds the State and Federal Standard.
- The 1-2 year old and 11-15 year old age groups and the African American and Hispanic groups have higher numbers of placements than other groups.
- The rate of Foster Care Re-entry appears to be met by Butte County when comparing to the State rate and not met for the Federal Standard. This apparent disparity makes accurate analysis difficult.
- The highest rate of re-entry is in the 3-5 year old group and all children re-entering foster care were white. This may warrant further study as to cause.

Conclusions

- Study of reunification services and their impact by age and ethnicity may be indicated.
- Factors that impact the length of time to adoption need to be identified and analyzed for solutions in process or changes in regulation that could affect the adoption process. Some of these factors may include, Court processes, and recruitment of adoptive homes.
- Services to promote adoption for older children should be studied for implementation.
- Shelter Care impacts the multiple placement statistics by adding an additional placement to each child who entered foster care through the shelter care program.
- Foster Care re-entry rates may be positively impacted by increased "Wraparound" services to families that remain in place for an extended amount of time.

The continuity of family relationship and connections is preserved for children

Findings

- Butte County exceeds the State rate for children placed with some or all siblings and is a County strength.
- Children placed with relatives are more likely to be placed with all siblings.
- FFA homes are less likely to have capacity for large sibling groups to be placed together.
- Fifty percent of all placements are in FFA foster homes.
- The rate of American Indian children placed in Indian homes, while below the State level, is increasing.
- Placements of Native American children with relatives are in line with the overall County rate of placement of children with relatives.

- Feedback indicated a need for greater collaboration and partnerships with the schools.

Conclusions

- Relative homes provide the greatest chance for siblings to be placed together and therefore resources should be developed and maintained to provide relatives with needed training and support.
- FFA/FFH homes should be assisted in recruiting and maintaining foster homes that can accommodate larger families, and are located in the communities where children are removed.
- Butte County has more FFA foster homes than FFH foster homes; this may be due to the increased rates established by the State for FFA placements. A Specialized Care Rate Proposal was submitted to the California Department of Social Services in March 2004 and the department is awaiting approval.
- Relative placement approval is a complex process that is difficult for some relatives to complete. Efforts to streamline this process would be beneficial.
- The statistics regarding ICWA placements requires some data cleanup as 50% of care providers of ICWA identified children did not indicate ethnic background.
- Communications with the Tribes have improved with the formation of workgroups to address issues and promote regular communication on a more formal basis. Further outreach needs to occur to ensure participation by all tribes.

Child and Family Well-Being

F. Youth emancipating from foster care are prepared to transition to Adulthood

Findings

- Butte County's Independent Living Program has good participation. Of the 242 eligible youth, 210 (89%) participated in the program.
- Both Child Welfare and Probation Youth are participants.
- Butte County rates higher than the State in the areas of, program participation (89% County to 70%) State and vocational training and equal to the State Rate (24%) for employment or other means of support
- Butte County rates lower than the State in the areas of receipt of high school diploma (17% County to 21% State) and enrollment in college or higher education (13% County to 14% State).
- Butte County's After Care Program for emancipated youth has good participation and is well liked by participants.
- Butte County's ILP, Aftercare and THHP programs are highly successful and serve as a model for other counties.

Conclusions

- More statistical information is needed to track services and their outcomes to emancipating youth. Some of the areas recommended to have statistical information collected include, number of youth emancipating, number of youth entering aftercare programs, numbers and types of programs completed by youth (currently statistic tracks completion of program which could be one class or the entire ILP program).

Areas for further exploration through the Peer Quality Case Review

The new multi-function unit design has changed the way in which social workers engage families and the development of the case plan. There is earlier family engagement with the primary social worker and both the primary and IR/ER/Court social workers develop the case plan. The addition of two facilitators to plan and implement the Family Team Decision-Making meetings has resulted in more consistent use of the decision-making model. The department believes these changes will result in family ownership and buy-in of the case plan, emphasize their strengths and improve the chances for success. Anecdotally it is believed that this has been a positive change however It would be a good use of the Peer quality Case Review to review this process and provide feedback regarding whether this systemic change is affecting outcomes.

We did not receive a soft copy of the following items. Contact county for this information:

SIP Cover Sheet
Intoduction and Narrative

Outcome/Systemic Factor: Safety Factor 1A and 1B: Recurrence of Maltreatment				
County’s Current Performance: Data indicates that the County rate of recurrence of maltreatment during various time periods measured by Federal and State indicators ranged between 12.5% and 17%. Some reasons for these new substantiated referrals may be a result of inadequate assessment during the first referral, a chronic condition in the home that was likely to recur, inadequate scope of services provided to families at the time of the first referral, or factors such as a new care provider, a change in the composition of the family after the first referral or greater awareness and reporting by the community.				
Improvement Goal 1.0 Decrease the rate of recurrence of maltreatment.				
Strategy 1. 1 Identify nature and outcome of subsequent substantiated reports of maltreatment during a specified time period.			Strategy Rationale In order to decrease the rate of recurrence of maltreatment the nature of subsequent referrals has to be identified in order to develop a strategy for improvement.	
Milestone	1.1.1 Develop case review team (CRT) and process for review of referrals of maltreatment where: ➤ children with substantiated allegation are not removed from parental care and experience a subsequent substantiated allegation within 12 months. ➤ children with a first substantiated allegation experience a subsequent referral within 6 and 12 months.	Timeframe	01/31/05	Program Managers
	1.1.2 Analyze findings from case review team to develop a strategic approach to reducing recurrence of maltreatment.		06/30/05	Assistant Director, Program Managers, Analyst, Supervisory Team and Community Partners
Strategy 1. 2 Monitor differential response services pilot program for families that are likely to reenter the system within a 12-month period of time.			Strategy Rationale A grant funded differential response program operating in the South County area will provide statistical evidence of successful techniques that may be expanded to the entire county.	

Butte County
System Improvement Plan: Safety Factor 1A and 1B

Milestone	1.2.1. Develop differential response reporting process.	Timeframe	10/30/04	Assigned to	Program Managers, Analyst, Staff Development Officer
	1.2.2 Analyze reports and provide results to Program Managers, Supervisory Team, Assistant Director and Community Partners for review of effectiveness of program.		05/30/05		Program Managers, Analyst
Improvement Goal 2.0 Increase community partner access to information regarding recurrence of maltreatment.					
Strategy 2.1 Provide quarterly Butte County Child Welfare Services Outcome & Accountability Data reports to community partners.			Strategy Rationale Stakeholders who provide services to children and families are critical partners in reducing the recurrence of maltreatment in the community. Sharing of information is key to continued dialogue and strategic planning regarding community partner’s role in affecting this outcome.		
Milestone	2.1.1 Develop report format	Timeframe	12/31/04	Assigned to	Analyst
	2.1.2 Distribute reports to Children’s Services Coordinating Council (CSCC), Butte County Children and Families Commission, System Improvement Plan Implementation Team, Butte County Child Abuse Prevention Council (BCCAPC), Local Childcare Planning Council, Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council, Tribal Council Interventions, and Safe From the Start.		01/05 - ongoing		Program Managers/ Assistant Director
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal None identified at this time.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. South County staff needs to be trained on the Differential Response Pilot program specific to access and types of appropriate referrals to be assigned.					

Butte County

System Improvement Plan: Safety Factor 1A and 1B

Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.
Community Partners play a key role in preventing and reducing recurrence of maltreatment in Butte County. By sharing information and identifying the nature of the subsequent referrals, better deployment of resources and services can occur, as well as identification of gaps in services.
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.
Statutory changes related to confidentiality will be necessary to implement a differential response system.

Outcome/Systemic Factor: 2A: Recurrence of abuse/neglect in homes where children were not removed Systemic Factor B: Case Review – Parent and youth participation in case planning					
County’s Current Performance: Data indicates Butte County’s rate of performance is 15.3%. The Self-Assessment Team, internal staff and the parent focus group do not feel that appropriate casework services are always provided to these families. Some of the areas of concern included: case plans are too deficit-focused rather than family-focused; parents and their support system are not sufficiently involved in case planning; case plans are sometimes unrealistic and not tailored to the specific needs of the family. Other concerns raised were that some children might be left in the home that should have been removed, therefore contributing to a high rate of recurrence.					
Improvement Goal 1.0 All social work staff will effectively increase their use of family focused case planning through the involvement of parents, the family’s support system, and youth in case plan development for Family Maintenance (FM) cases.					
Strategy 1. 1 Develop and communicate policy regarding need for increased participation by families in FM in family focused case planning.				Strategy Rationale The use of family focused case planning for families in FM is inconsistent. Clearly defined agency policy will clarify agency expectations for all staff to involve families in FM in family focused case planning.	
Milestone	1.1.1 Complete Family Focused Case Planning-Family Maintenance policy.	Timeframe	11/30/04	Assigned to	Program Managers
	1.1.2 Review and approve department policy.		12/30/04		Program Managers,Supervisors
	1.1.3 Implement new policy through unit meetings.		1/31/05		Supervisors
Strategy 1. 2 All staff will receive additional training in family-focused case planning.				Strategy Rationale Family-focused case planning is an evidence-based practice that improves outcomes for children and families. Consistent use of family focused case planning for all FM cases will increase compliance with case plans and reduce recurrence of maltreatment.	

Butte County
System Improvement Plan: Safety Indicator 2A

Milestone	1.2.1 Develop mandatory family-focused case planning training schedule for all staff.	Timeframe	02/28/05	Assigned to	Staff Development Officer, Program Managers
	1.2.2 Provide mandatory family-focused case planning training for all staff.		04/30/05		Staff Development Officer, Program Managers, Supervisors
Strategy 1.3 Monitor rate of family focused case planning policy compliance.			Strategy Rationale Family focused case planning and the use of an outside Family Team Decision-Making Facilitator is a fairly new process. Monitoring the use and content of these meetings will ensure both quantity and quality of this process.		
Milestone	1.3.1 Identify FM cases by Social Worker/Unit that have not had family focused case planning meetings.	Timeframe	12/31/04	Assigned to	Supervisors, Analyst
	1.3.2 Hire and train an additional Family Team Decision-Making Facilitator to accommodate increased capacity.		12/15/04		Program Managers, Community Partners
Improvement Goal 2.0 Decrease rate of recurrence of maltreatment in homes where children are not removed from 15.3% to 14.5% over the next 12 months.					
Strategy 2.1 Explore adoption of Structured Decision-Making (SDM) for Butte County. If adopted, the Structured Decision-Making Safety Assessment would be used to improve consistent decision-making regarding the removal of a child from parental care.			Strategy Rationale Self-Assessment results indicate that social workers may differ in their decision-making processes regarding the removal of children from parental care. The Supervisory/Management Team recommends that a uniform safety assessment process be pursued.		

Butte County
System Improvement Plan: Safety Indicator 2A

Milestone	2.1.1 Analyze fiscal impact of obtaining Structured Decision-Making in Butte County.	Timeframe	01/31/05	Assigned to	Program Managers, Analyst
	2.1.2 Contact counties using Structured Decision-Making for purpose of evaluating effectiveness of this instrument.		11/30/04		Program Managers, Analyst
	2.1.3Pursue implementation of Structured Decision-Making or if not fiscally or programmatically feasible, discuss alternate decision making tool.		06/30/05		Program Managers, Assistant Director
Strategy 2.2 Develop process to review cases that experience recurrence of maltreatment.			Strategy Rationale In order to provide services that will positively effect recurrence of maltreatment, a study of the factors contributing to subsequent substantiated referrals is needed.		
Milestone	2.2.1 Develop case review team (CRT) and process for review of referrals of maltreatment where: ➤ children with substantiated allegation are not removed from parental care and experience a subsequent substantiated allegation within 12 months. ➤ children with a first substantiated allegation experience a subsequent referral within 6 and 12 months.	Timeframe	01/31/05	Assigned to	Program Managers

	2.2.3 Analyze findings from case review team to develop a strategic approach to reducing recurrence of maltreatment.		06/30/05		Assistant Director, Analyst, Supervisory Team, Community Partners and Program Managers
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goal. None identified at this time					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Training and educational requirements for all staff around family focused case planning will be necessary as well as specific report development in Business Objects.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. Community partners will be invited to participate on the case review teams and assist in developing a strategic approach to decrease recurrence of maltreatment.					
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. None identified at this time.					

Outcome/Systemic Factor: 2C Timely Social Worker Visits with Child					
County's Current Performance: Data indicates Butte County's rate of timely social worker visits with child is 56.3%. Based on review of Safe Measures and feedback from social work and management staff, we believe that the low percentage is reflective of data not always being entered into CWS/CMS in a timely manner, attempted contacts not being entered appropriately and possible workload and staffing issues.					
Improvement Goal 1.0 All contacts for monthly social work visits will be entered timely and correctly into CWS/CMS.					
Strategy 1. 1 Appropriate staff will be identified and receive training on methods of timely and accurate data input.			Strategy Rationale Based on feedback from social work and management staff, training materials that are consistent and easy to understand need to be developed. Training is a required tool for social work staff to adequately perform the data input functions of their job. Targeting training to only those staff who request or have been identified by the Supervisor as requiring additional training will focus resources where needed most, increase accuracy of data input, and demonstrate agency's commitment to addressing this issue.		
Milestone	1.1.1 Identify via CWS/CMS and Safe Measures those units/staff with untimely or inaccurate data input issues regarding monthly visits.	Timeframe	11/30/04	Assigned to	Program Managers/Supervisors
	1.1.2 Establish and approve training curriculum.		12/31/04		Program Managers/ Staff Development Officer
	1.1.3 Complete training for identified staff.		1/31/05		Staff Development Officer
	1.1.4 Post training materials on department intranet for easy access by staff.		8/31/05		Department Intranet Committee
Strategy 1. 2 Program Managers will meet regularly with supervisors to review unit performance and ensure compliance with System Improvement Plan specific to timely and accurate data input.			Strategy Rationale Agency expectations need to be articulated and monitored by Program Managers. It is critical that all Supervisors adhere to and monitor their staff to the same standards regarding timely and accurate documentation into CWS/CMS.		

Butte County
System Improvement Plan: Safety Indicator 2C

Milestone	1.2.1 Train all supervisors in Safe Measures for the purpose of assessing, collecting and interpreting data.	Timeframe	10/31/04	Assigned to	Analyst
	1.2.2 Review Safe Measures reports monthly and share department, unit and individual outcomes with staff in appropriate forums.		11/04		Supervisors/ Program Managers
	1.2.3 Discuss, direct and support staff in meeting data input expectations. Supervisors to review expectations in unit and individual meetings and in employee performance reviews.		3/31/05 -ongoing		Supervisors/Program Managers
Improvement Goal 2.0 All children will be visited on a monthly basis unless exempted by regulation					
Strategy 2.1 Review Children’s Services deployment of allocated social worker positions to both case-carrying and non-case carrying functions.			Strategy Rationale Current staffing levels and job assignments may contribute to the ability of social workers to complete monthly visits timely.		
Milestone	2.1.1 Identify a select group of Analyst, Supervisory and Management staff to conduct analysis		1/01/05		Assistant Director/Program Managers
	2.1.2 Present outcome of analysis to entire Supervisory and Management team for discussion and possible action.		4/30/05		Program Managers
Describe systemic changes needed to further support the improvement goals. Systemic changes related to assignment of allocated staff may need to occur depending on the outcome of the analysis.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Training and technical assistance regarding data input may be requested from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and / or UC Davis Training Academy.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. As an internal agency matter no involvement of community partners is required. Coordination is required between Butte County, CDSS, UC Davis Training Academy and CWS/CMS Project.					

Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. None identified at this time.

Butte County Probation
System Improvement Plan: Permanency and Stability 4E

Outcome/Systemic Factor: Permanency and Stability 4E: ICWA Placement Preferences				
County's Current Performance: Data is currently unavailable due to a lack of departmental collection, confirmation and recording procedures.				
Improvement Goal 1.0 Develop procedures to collect, confirm and document the Native American status and ICWA eligibility of children involved in the juvenile justice system. Utilize information to preserve and maintain child's relationship with their tribe, keeping the tribe informed as to court hearings and case status where appropriate, accessing available tribal services for the child and his/her family, and, if needed, placement within the Native American community if possible and appropriate.				
Strategy 1. 1 Departmental collection of data in an efficient, organized and consistent manner. Confirmation of data if possible. Documentation of data.			Strategy Rationale Accurate Native American data allows probation the opportunity to assist in the preservation of local Native American tribes. With proper ICWA eligibility determination, probation may access/consider rehabilitative services for the child and/or family within their own culture.	
Milestone	1.1.1 Develop a departmental team to research possible Native American/ICWA Eligibility procedures that meet both state and federal ICWA mandates. Research success rates of ICWA procedure implementation programs among probation departments in other counties. Designate departmental ICWA Liaison/Representative.	Timeframe	11/15/04	Assigned to Juvenile Unit Supervising Probation Officers

Butte County Probation
System Improvement Plan: Permanency and Stability 4E

	<p>1.1.2 Implement department-wide Native American/ICWA Eligibility procedures:</p> <p>Implement a comprehensive, intake-level, social, family and cultural background information gathering system/assessment of every child deemed to be at risk of entering foster care.</p> <p>Modify departmental foster care case plans to include documentation of ICWA eligibility, tribal affiliation and tribal contact information.</p> <p>Modify departmental foster care plans to include persons to be considered for placement with preference given to appropriate Native American family members first, appropriate tribal members second and all others third.</p>		12/15/04		<p>Juvenile Unit Supervising Probation Officers</p> <p>Departmental ICWA Liaison</p>
	<p>1.1.3 Hold departmental meetings to educate probation case managers as to the need for and goals of Native American/ICWA Eligibility procedures.</p> <p>Discuss possible state and federal sanctions for non-compliance.</p>		Initial: 12/15/04; Ongoing		Juvenile Unit Supervising Probation Officers
<p>Strategy 1. 2 Utilizing data derived from collection and documentation procedures connect Native American children and families to local Native American services.</p>			<p>Strategy Rationale Children and families may be more receptive to tribal services, benefit more overall and exit the probation child welfare system sooner. Upon exit, children and families may benefit from a more permanent, more cohesive support system.</p>		

Butte County Probation
System Improvement Plan: Permanency and Stability 4E

Milestone	1.2.1. Meet regularly with the four local Native American Tribes. Research Native American culture and local rehabilitation services	Timeframe	Research: 12/15/04; Ongoing Meetings as permitted	Assigned to	Juvenile Unit Supervising Probation Officers Departmental ICWA Liaison
	1.2.2 Wherever possible and appropriate, the connection of Native American children and families to appropriate local Native American services.		12/15/05; Ongoing		Juvenile Probation Officers/Case Managers
	1.2.3 Development of a dependable support system and after care services within the family’s own Native American culture to reduce the likelihood of Native American children re-entering the probation child welfare system.		12/15/05; Ongoing		Juvenile Probation Officers/Case Managers
Discuss changes in identified systemic factors needed to further support the improvement goals. A lack of Native American <u>residential</u> programs specializing in drug and alcohol addiction, sex-offender treatment, behavioral/conduct problems and behavioral health issues. Not enough Native American Tribal representatives specifically designated to assist children and families in the child welfare system. Not enough Native American pre-placement services such as Native American counselors and therapists, Native American after school programs, Native American Mentor Programs and Native American diversion and accountability programs. A lack of Native American foster parents.					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals. Current and accurate State and Federal ICWA information, Native American background and cultural training. Local Native American input as to ICWA procedures and the child welfare system.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals. Collaboration and cooperation of local Native American tribes.					

Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals. None Identified at this time.